(b) whether it is also a fact that among the 20 countries, where four-fifths of all undernourished children live, India is home to the largest number of undernourished children;

(c) whether the last round of the National Family Health Survey shows that malnutrition has reduced by just one per cent during the last eight years; and

(d) if so, the action proposed in this matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MATIRENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) Yes, Sir. India has a number of eminent scientists in the field of nutrition. However, Malnutrition is a multifaceted problem, the determinants of which vary from food insecurity, female illiteracy, poor access to health-care, safe drinking water, sanitation and poor purchasing power. Early marriages of girls, teenage pregnancies resulting in low birth weight of the new boms, poor breast feeding and complementary feeding paractices, ignorance about nutritional needs of infants and young children and repeated infections further aggravate the situation.

(b) As per the Lancet's Series on Maternal and Child Malnutrition, 80% of the World's undernourished children live in just 20 countries but the country wise information is not available.

(c) As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS) -2 (1998-99) conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 47% children are underweight while NFHS-3 (2005-06) has reported that 46% children are underweight. This data is as per the National Centre for Health Statistics (NCHS) standards. However, as per New WHO Growth Standards, 43% children are underweight according to NFHS-2, while 40% children are underweight as per NFHS-3.

(d) The Government is seized of the problem of malnutrition and is implementing a number of schemes throughout the country, which directly or indirectly improve the nutritional status of women and children. Some of these are as under:

(i) Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme (Ministry of Women and Child Development);

The steps taken in the recent past to increase the effectiveness of the delivery of services under ICDS includes:

The scheme has been expanded twice in the year 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 during the Tenth Five Year Plan.

The Government has doubled the financial norms for supplementary nutrition from Re. 1 to Rs. *21*- per beneficiary per day.

From the year 2005-06,50% cost of supplementary nutrition is also being shared with the States/UTs.

Constant emphasis on States to:

Ensure regular supply of supplementary nutrition as per schematic norms.

Ensure efective convergence of health, nutrition, education and safe drinking water services under various programmes.

Generate nutrition awareness.